

GOVERNMENT WITHIN A GOVERNMENT

(By Edith Kermit Roosevelt)

WASHINGTON.—The Ford Foundation's controversial role in restructuring New York City's public-school system has once more brought into question the power and influence of America's gigantic, tax-exempt foundations which operate entirely outside democratic processes.

The tax-exempt philanthropic corporations, such as the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation can best be understood by comparing them to the secularized monastic and teaching orders in the Middle Ages which acquired vast tax-exempt properties. Like these self-perpetuating feudal entities, the foundations are able to operate as virtual governments, but immune from any type of public or legal accountability.

The operations in New York City of the Ford Foundation typically illustrates the ruthless tactics used by the foundation's self-described "elite" in their drive for political power. One of the Ford Foundation's goals has been to fundamentally change the direction and control of New York City's public-school system. City educational institutions provide the Ford Foundation with a vehicle in their drive to control minority and ethnic groups in urban areas through dollars distributed to key personnel who will be beholden to them.

The problem here is that without normal checks and balances or any sort of genuine accountability, the door is left open for the school system to fall into the hands of unqualified persons and extremists of various sorts. An instance is the case of Herman Ferguson, principal of IS 55 in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration School District in Brooklyn, New York, which was set up under a Ford Foundation grant. Ferguson was arrested and recently convicted of conspiracy in Queens, according to *New York Magazine* of November 18th. He was alleged to be a member of the Black Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and was found guilty of conspiring to kill NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins and Urban League Director Whitney Young.

This situation was made possible when the New York Board of Education permitted the local board to make its own appointments not only of the Unit Administrator but of principals, even when these principals were not on the city's examination lists.

Teachers who objected or would not fall into line with this breakdown in regularized procedures and the integrity of the schools were simply ordered transferred. A report by Dr. John H. Niemeyer, president of the Bank Street College of Education, disclosed that last Spring the Board of Education told the local government board that teachers considered unacceptable could be transferred out of the district so long as no great publicity was attached to such transfers. Obviously, the one thing which the Ford Foundation and the people it works with do not want is publicity or public debate concerning their operations and the issues involved.

Albert Shanker, president of the United Federation of Teachers, has voiced objections of teachers asking for "the right of due process." He has charged that "a very substantial number" of members of the Board of Education "are in such great debt to the Ford Foundation that they cannot act independently."

Among the three board members which he identified as receiving Ford Foundation assistance is Rev. Milton Galamison who heads an organization called School and Community Organized for Partnership in Education which has received \$160,000 from the Ford Foundation. Galamison has been arrested nine times for demonstrations against city school policies. He organized last May a one-day boycott in support of demands for greater community control of schools by Negroes in Brooklyn.

The political motivation of the Ford Foundations' activities are plainly seen in the sort of persons receiving its grants. This led Shanker to say that the Ford Foundation ought to be treated as a "political lobby" and should lose its tax-exempt status and be "required to fully disclose the extent" of its "activities in this field."

From the point of view of the foundations themselves, this might be a wise move. The properties of the monastic orders were finally confiscated when they became involved in secular, partisan political activities. This Nation's giant tax-exempt foundations are preparing for themselves the same sort of fate.